1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

others gather around him. His step is almost a complete reproduction of a modern "buck and wing" jig step. When he has finished he takes his spear-thrower and designates the next dancer by tapping one of the chorus on the shoulder with it. This individual also does a solo dance and then taps another. This continues until all the individuals in the group have danced at least once. 884 535

Native Interpretation.—The leader of the Ulmark ceremony told me, "The logs are the backbone of Muit." The men who sit on it are two kaitjimbal (large kangaroos who are Yiritja) and two pardi-pardi (stone kangaroos who are Dua). "They dance because those two old women named them in their dance. The two old women tried to catch these kangaroos but they ran away." The two Yiritja kangaroos are called gur-warn or messengers: "They are all the same as the kakawar [Yiritja snakes] in the Gunabibi." 884 535-713

The women represent the Wawilak women throughout the whole dance. "The women get up and dance around like those two [Wawilak] women did before when the rain fell down. The women carry yam sticks like those two women did. They are trying to stop the rain and to stop Muit from coming out." The words "Kait-bal kait-bal" were supposedly used by the two Creator Sisters in the Liaaluomir clan country.

The men take off their ornaments and "clothing" and cut their hair "so that they will go very poor and skinny and look like a man gets when there is a long wet and little food. They are all the same as waiting for the dry season to come." These acts symbolize the effect of ceremonial uncleanliness on nature and man.

Concerning the solo dance, I was told: "They dance this way because those two women did that and when one sister finished dancing, she hit the other sister with a spear-thrower and this one started dancing."

B. The Ceremonial Drum, Uvar (the Great Python) Is Made

1. A large hollow log is formed into a drum and beaten with a pandanus stump. 884 534

1. During the progress of Section A several men, including the leader or his younger brother, go into the surrounding bush and select a hollow tree, cut it down, clean it out, and remove the outer bark. The log is recut to a four- or five-foot length and carried to a small bush house that has been made for it on the men's ground. Here it is painted with snake figures, emus, and other animals, as well as plants. [531]

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

884 5. Snail shell rattles are manufactured.

6. A bark house is constructed and is painted with ceremonial designs.

1. While the group of headdress dances of Section F dances is being performed, two emblems are under construction. They are large representations of the Dua kangaroo and Yiritja kangaroo tails. The smaller [211] emblems previously mentioned function as message sticks for the kangaroos who announce the ceremony to the other tribes; these larger ones are used as emblems in the ceremony. They are brought out by the dancers who jump over each other. Yiritja jump over the Dua and Dua over the Yiritja in the same manner as our children play leap frog.

2. If the ceremony is to last two years the snake dance ground is not excavated, since it forms a part of what is considered the final portion of the Ulmark. If it is decided to complete the ceremony in one season, the Yiritja and Dua kangaroo messengers dig the dance place to a depth of a man's shoulder. It is in the center of the dance ground and well protected by heavy clumps of jungle growth. It has the same triangular shape as the snake ground in Section D and the one found in the Djungguan ceremony (which is not dug but is on the surface of the ground); but in addition it has a pathway dug to one side of the triangle. It is the python snake's body. It is supposed to face the southeast both in this ceremony and in the Djungguan. Bushes are piled in it at the head of the ground.

3. The women's dance ground is only a cleared space in the center of the general camp.

4. While the men are digging the triangular snake ground, the women, of both home and visiting clans, clear a small path which encircles the whole of the men's ceremonial grounds. (It winds and twists like the track left by a huge python.)

5. After the excavating has ceased, the men gather dry snail shells. [237 534] These are painted with red ocher on which is dotted white clay. A half dozen of these shells are strung on one string and tied to a spear-thrower. Several of these snail-shell rattles are made.

6. A bark house is also built on the ceremonial grounds. The house [342 531] is the same in structure as those used in the rainy season. The interior walls are painted with realistic and geometric figures (which illustrate the story of the two Wawilak sisters).

884 773 *Native Interpretation.*—The triangular and the women's dance ground are identical with the Djungguan dance places and are looked

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

283 now modern Queensland, this ratio is reversed and the chief material for pubic decorations or coverings is of vegetable fiber string.

415 *Women's Food Bags.*—The women's food bags (like the men's baskets) [293] are so much a part of their ordinary equipment that the writer has placed them in the category of things worn. The natives think of them as such.

The bags are of two major types. The norm of one is around twenty-one inches in length and twelve inches in width, while the other has a norm of eighteen by eight inches. The mesh of the larger bag is usually about one-quarter inch in diameter; the smaller has a mesh of about an eighth to a sixteenth of an inch. Each has a handle of from two to eight strands of fiber string tied to the rim of the bag. The handle is made long enough (sixteen inches) to fit over the forehead of the woman and allow the bag to lie against her back just below the neck.

286 Two sticks are put in the ground some few inches apart, according to the size of the bag desired, and the basal strand placed around them. The woman squats or sits while weaving. She works from left to right on one side of the sticks, forming the loop-meshes across the basal strand.[1] The finished side is taken from the sticks and put on the opposite side of the stick, so that the weaver now continues working from left to right to finish the other side of the bag. The ends are then sewn together. The basal strand may be removed, but it frequently remains in the bag.

415 These bags are used by the women to transport cycad nuts, yams, larger lily bulbs, or any other vegetable or animal food brought to camp by them. Men do not use this type of container.

● [531] Rarely, to decorate the bags, bands of darker and lighter fiber string are alternated at intervals of about three-quarters of an inch.

415 *Spirit Bags.*—Throughout northeastern Arnhem Land the medicine men 286 use a small bag made by the simple loop technique of the woman's food bag. 293 Ordinarily the string used is extremely fine and the mesh about an eighth-inch in diameter. The bag itself is about four to six inches in diameter, and, when stuffed with native cord and tied at the top with vegetable fiber string, is round in shape. It is manufactured exactly as is a woman's food bag. A string handle about sixteen inches long is attached at its neck and worn as a head circlet so that the bag usually reposes over the ear. At times it is worn around the medicine man's neck.

[531] The bag may be decorated with alternating bands of dark and light fiber, 415 or it may have a series of geometrical designs in red, yellow, white, and black painted upon it. Frequently it is also covered with birds' down. 293 At other times the whole bag is completely covered with red ocher, with

[1] "The circular basal strand is identical with the stirrup of the European netter, and is either fixed like it to some circular support or else held in position by passing the leg, big toe, etc., through it: it usually remains as it is, part and parcel of the manufactured article." W. E. Roth, *North Queensland Ethnological Bulletin*, Brisbane, 1901, No. 1, page 12.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

no other ornamentation upon it. The red ocher is not only for decoration, but it adds spirit "power" to the receptacle.

East of the Goyder River the bag is used exclusively by the medicine man, whose spirit helpers reside in it. West of the Goyder River it is also worn by anyone who so desires for good luck in hunting. Here also it is held in the teeth during a fight to add magical powers and bravery to the fighter.

Fighting "Tie."—Sometimes a "tie" is carried in the mouth to gain power during a fight. The tie is made by the same technique as the spirit bag. It is made of coarse vegetable fiber string, is flat, about eighteen inches long and three inches wide, and has a fiber string handle which allows the owner to wear it around his neck when not in use. It has ornamental value, although it is never decorated except with alternating bands of dark and light fiber.

The netting stitch is not used in the making of bags or the tie in this area as it is in Queensland.

Forehead Bands.—This article of ornamentation is made of small thread-like string with a mesh that is a sixteenth of an inch in diameter. Its length and width correspond to the size of the wearer's forehead. It is worn only by males. Each end of the band has a string attached to it for tying at the back of the head. The bands are used in the Gunabibi, Ulmark, and Djungguan ceremonies. They are covered with a solid layer of white pipe clay or red ocher. Sometimes bands are made of paper bark tied with fiber string and painted with red ocher or white clay.

Women's and Children's "Harness."—This curious body ornament used by women and small children looks, when worn, much like a harness used for hitching horses to a carriage. It is composed of one continuous strand of twelve to eighteen strings of two-ply vegetable fiber. The string is formed into two large equal loops which are joined by wrapping with fiber string for a distance of about ten inches. Each loop is then wrapped separately for from two to five inches from both sides of the joint. The wrapped sections are usually painted with alternating white and red or yellow and red bands of paint. The unwrapped string frequently is covered with red ocher.

Women and children wear the harness during ceremonies. The wrapped portion falls down the middle of the back; the arms are slipped through the loops which are made to cross below the breast.

Bugle-grass Necklace.—The bright straw-yellow bugle grass is cut into small beads about one-half inch in length and strung on a thin vegetable fiber string. The string is then looped back and forth to form about eighteen lengths of ten inches each. To each of the two ends of the bunch of loops is attached a single fiber string. The beads are worn against the throat by tying the fiber strings at the back of the wearer's neck. Men, women, and children wear these ornaments. The bright yellow is particularly effective in contrast with the gleaming black skin of the aborigines.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

open type. A tree root is sometimes used for the weft of the open-work basket. 285

A.—The closely woven type of basket has three norms in size: the large, the medium, and the small. The large type is eighteen inches in length with a variation of eleven and one-half to twenty inches, and a diameter at the rim of six to eight inches. There is a slight diminution of diameter in the basket from the rim to the bottom until, within three inches of the bottom, the circumference rapidly converges to a point. This basket is usually used by the women, but occasionally men carry one. Ordinarily it is undecorated. The women use it to gather food and carry their possessions, such as fire sticks, string, et cetera. 285 415

The medium-sized variety has a length-norm of eleven inches and a diameter of three inches. It varies in length from nine and one-half to fifteen inches, and the diameter sometimes reaches four and one-quarter inches. It is used almost entirely by men. They carry their personal belongings in it. Such things as stone spear heads wrapped in paper bark, red ocher, white clay, human hair and vegetable fiber string, and ceremonial objects carefully wrapped to protect them from the profane eyes of women are found in these baskets.

The small type of basket is very closely woven so that it can carry honey. It is owned by the men. It is seven inches long and has a diameter of two and one-half inches. There is little variation in this type.

All the above types are stitched about the rim with fiber string to keep the mesh from working apart, and to strengthen the basket and prevent it from becoming too flexible.

Baskets usually are painted red, black, yellow, and white for two-thirds of their circumference. The remaining third is left unpainted or undecorated, for it is the portion that fits against the wearer's body. The string handle is attached at the top of the basket at the points where the painting starts. It is composed of two to six strings sixteen inches long. Men wear their baskets under one arm with the string slung over the same shoulder. Women always wear theirs with the string handle across the forehead, the basket hanging against the back of the head and neck. The women's mode of carrying a basket is so characteristic that it is used by a man dancing a woman's part in a sacred ceremony. [531] [482]

Several types of designs are painted on the surface of the baskets (without a preliminary coating of red ocher): 285 415

(1) The surface of the basket is covered with hatched-in squares.

(2) A series of yellow, white and red spirals run from the rim to the bottom of the basket. 531

(3) The length of the basket is divided into three or four sections and painted in light and dark colors.

In addition to painting, an overstitching of pandanus fiber sometimes runs laterally about the basket.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

285 415 531 Red parrot feathers are woven or stuck into the men's baskets. Usually they form a small band around the top of the basket, sometimes a solid mass over the upper half of it, and again they outline the ordinary square pattern that covers the entire surface. Human hair is sometimes stitched on for an outline instead of feathers. It is also used as a fringe over the entire basket or on a line about two or three inches from the top. Opossum fur is also used as a fringe and to outline the diamond pattern.—Any of the described baskets may have from two to eight pendants of parrot feathers hanging from the rim of the basket to several inches beyond its bottom.

285 415 [482] B.—The large type of open-work basket has the greatest size of any found in this area. It is thirty-two inches by eighteen inches in size and has a mesh of three-eighths of an inch. It is carried by a woman by means of a fiber-string forehead band and is usually used for gathering cycad palm nuts. The smaller-sized open-work basket has a mesh of one-quarter inch. It normally is seventeen inches deep, but varies from fourteen to eighteen inches. It has a diameter variation of from six to eight inches. All open-mesh baskets are stitched at the top. None is ever decorated, and all of them are used by women to gather food and to carry their personal belongings.

361 *Armlets, Wristlets, and Anklets.*—The native armlets are usually made by the plaiting technique. The plait consists of from two to five strands, two being the normal number. The armlet is normally from one-half to three-quarters of an inch in width, but sometimes reaches a width of two inches. The diameter corresponds to the size of the wearer's arm. Wristlets, but not armlets, are made on the arm of the wearer by another person and worn until they fall off.

Spear grass is the usual material. The grass is split into two or three pieces and soaked in water for one or two days before it is ready for use. A small stick or bone is used for tucking in the free strands to give the ornament a smooth appearance and keep the edges from breaking to pieces. [531] Sometimes fiber string is wrapped about the armlets, and many are painted with angular designs.

Women wear a series of armlets half up the upper arm, but men only put on a few.

Another variety of armlet is made from the end of a piece of cane. About a quarter-inch width of the reed is wrapped with fiber string which has feathers woven into it, or feathers are bound to the armlet with a cord. [237] Frequently from two to four parrot-feather string pendants, tipped with white cockatoo feathers, are hung from the armlet; these usually have a core of human hair on to which the feathers are wrapped with fiber string. The same technique is used for feathered string pendants as for other objects decorated with feathered string.

Anklets are sometimes made in the same way as armlets; but whereas the latter are worn by men, women, and children most of the time, the anklet is seldom worn.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

Ainmaras.—These native artifacts serve as a woman's article of apparel, a mat to sit on, a sunshade, and a mosquito and fly net. All of the uses except the first, which is primary, are employed by both men and women. 285

The ainmara is made of the inner bark of the pandanus with the twining technique. When open it looks like the bottom of a large basket, and when folded like a quarter section of a circle; it is ordinarily twenty inches long and thirty-six inches at its greatest width. The folded ainmaras are a constant equipment of women.

Sometimes the warp is left as a six-inch fringe around the edge of the ainmara.

The half-circle variety of the ainmara (twenty-six and one-half inches by thirty inches) cannot be used for a sunshade or mosquito and fly net. Both are sometimes decorated with overstitched lines of pandanus fiber or human hair string. [531]

Ainmaras are made by both men and women, but usually by women. The woman starts at the center and gradually widens it as she continues her twining. The enlarging surface is kept smooth and even by placing the mat on the sand and rubbing it with a smooth flat stone. [462]

A small fiber string loop is put into the point of the folded ainmara and a woman carries it on her arm at the elbow or by holding it in her hand. Most of the women wear no pubic coverings and when a strange man approaches the camp they cover their pudenda with the ainmara. Sometimes a woman's modesty affects her in such a way that she hides her face rather than her pubic parts. [482] [291] [834]

During the midday siesta men and sometimes women open the ainmara and double the body up beneath it to keep the flies off and protect themselves from the direct rays of the sun. During the sand-fly and mosquito months the ainmaras are used to keep off these insects.

3. Weapons

Spear-thrower (Mang-el)

The type of spear-thrower used by the Murngin and natives of northeastern Arnhem Land has a general distribution in Australia from the Kimberleys of West Australia to the southern shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The particular variety of this weapon found among the Murngin reaches the Daly River in the west and south, the Katherine River, also in the south, and east to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Groote Eylandt people possess a modification of the mangel type of spear-thrower. The Kimberley variety, although belonging to the same general type as the Murngin, is larger and is made of a different kind of material from that found among the Arnhem Land natives. 411 171

The length of the mangel ranges from thirty-four to thirty-nine inches, with a norm of three feet. It is made of a hard wood of medium weight 411

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

411 (usually a variety of eucalyptus). Its width is one and one-half to two inches, with a norm of one and three-quarters inch, and it possesses a thickness of about one-quarter of an inch, the two sides being very slightly convex. The neck of the mangel is only about one inch wide. A grip, sometimes wrapped with fiber string or kangaroo and opossum gut, is provided at the handle end of the mangel by narrowing the mangel to an inch in width.

The spear-throwing end has a rounded wooden peg about one inch long which is hafted to and protrudes at a sharp angle from the main shaft. A hole about one inch in length is cut into the distal end of the shaft. The graduated end of the peg is inserted into this hole and fastened by a wrapping of fiber string and a secondary coating of iron-tree resin.

[531] The mangel is sometimes decorated with bands of paint, or with totemic designs if a ceremony is being performed. Frequently bands are incised around the handle, or geometrical patterns on the body of the shaft.

The mangel is used to project a spear with greater velocity, force, and distance, both in fighting and in hunting. The one used for harpooning sea animals is usually larger than the ordinary hunting and fighting type. Each spear has a small hole in the handle end of the shaft to allow the insertion of the spear-thrower's peg. The flat shaft of the mangel is held between the third and fourth fingers, the first three fingers pressing against the hand, while the fourth and thumb hold the spear. The spear shaft runs along parallel to the flat side of the shaft of the mangel from the peg to the fingers.

When ready to be thrown, the mangel is held over and back of the shoulder and is then quickly thrown forward. The thumb and fourth fingers loose the spear shaft and release the spear from the mangel, which is retained in the hand.

During a fight or peacemaking duel the mangel is sometimes held by the center of the shaft and is used as a kind of parrying stick to ward off the spears thrown, since the Murngin have no shields. It is also used as a club when the men are fighting at close quarters during a camp fight. The sharp edge of the shaft frequently cuts an unwary opponent's face, neck, or head.

The natives also use a cylindrical type of spear-thrower, slightly shorter than the mangel, with a diameter of about three-quarters of an inch. Human hair string is attached to several inches of basal strand much as for a small pubic apron, and then wrapped around the handle end of the spear-thrower to serve as a kind of fringe. The basal strand of the fringe is tied around a small incision made in the shaft about three-quarters of an inch from the end. The tassel is about six inches long and three-quarters of an inch in diameter.

The notch in which the peg of the cylindrical form of spear-thrower is placed is not cut all the way through the distal end of the shaft as it is in

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

the mangel type, but only about half of the wood at the place where the incision is made is cut away. Fiber string and resin form the hafting materials.

The cylindrical type of spear-thrower is not a hunting weapon, and is supposed to be carried only by old men, although young men have been observed using it. Its chief use is ceremonial. The leader of a totemic dance frequently directs the dances with it, using it as a baton as he keeps time to the rhythm. Sometimes this spear-thrower baton has red parrot feathers tied to the end of each piece of human hair string.

Spears

The spears possessed by the Murngin may be divided into four main types, according to the variety of heads possessed by each. They are: (1) stone, (2) wooden, (3) sting-ray prong, and (4) in the present day, iron.[3] The writer has chosen the above classification by material because each has a separate technique for its manufacture and because a classification by function would not divide the spears into different varieties, for all of them, with the exception of the third, are used in both fighting and hunting. Spears are used only by men and boys, never by women.

A. *Stone-pointed Spears.*—The length of the flaked-stone spear head has a norm of six inches and a variation of from three and a half to seven and a half inches. Its diameter at the upper end (widest part) is two inches, with a variation of from one and one-half to three inches. Some of the spear heads are serrated along the edges, but the majority are not. (The chipping technique is not applied to stone spear heads in this area, and is found only among the tribes centering around the Kimberley region of West Australia.) The peoples of the coastal plain obtain all their spear heads by trading with the table-land peoples in the interior.

The wooden shaft, usually of eucalyptus (but also of canes and mangrove wood), is normally about six feet long, and varies from five feet nine inches to nine feet in length. The diameter of the shaft is three-quarters of an inch. Its distal end is split in the center for about four to five inches to allow the stone head to be inserted. The stone and wood are then joined by a wrapping of fiber string and a secondary coating of native beeswax. The proximal end has a small hole bored in it. This serves as an articulation socket for the peg of the spear-thrower. For a distance of three to four inches each side of the hole, the shaft is wrapped with fiber string and coated with ironwood cement to prevent splitting.

All the shafts are smeared with red ocher, and eighteen inches of the distal ends is painted with white clay. The beeswax is likewise covered with pipe clay. Painting is for decoration only, and has no utilitarian or magical purpose.

B. *Wooden-headed Spears.*—Spears with wooden heads may be classified

[3] Not discussed here, for the reason that they form an exotic element in the culture.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

411 in the following manner, the criteria being the technique used in their manufacture and the form of the spear head:

Type I. One prong
  Subtype A. Unbarbed
    Variety 1. Sharpened stick with head and shaft of one piece
    Variety 2. Cane shaft, hafted to sharpened hard sick
      a. Large
      b. Small
    Variety 3. Flat wooden blade hafted to the shaft
  Subtype B. Barbed
    Variety 4a. Lace spear (barbs partially cut), usually hafted head, but sometimes whole spear made out of one piece
    Variety 4b. True barbed spear, but barbed only on one side
    Variety 5. Javelin type, barbed on one or both sides
Type II. Multiple prongs
  Subtype A. Two-pronged hafted head, barbed on one side (fighting spear)
  Subtype B. Two-, three-, and four-pronged hafted heads, barbed on one side (fish spear)

Variety 1.—One-piece spear (the unbarbed, sharpened stick): This spear is normally about eight feet nine inches long, with a variation ranging from five feet seven inches to nine feet three inches. It is a plain sharpened stick, usually of mangrove wood, and is ordinarily made with less of the finish and the pride of workmanship manifest in the others manufactured by the Murngin. It is used chiefly for fighting in mangrove jungles and thickets, since it does not catch on the limbs of the trees. It is also used for hunting. Another advantage this spear possesses is that, because of its small head, it allows the native to carry a larger number than he can of the others. A half-inch hole at the spear-thrower end for the articulation of the spear-thrower may or may not be coated with resin. The distal end tapers gradually for about one foot to a sharp point to form the spear head, and is usually painted and incised for a distance of about two feet to mark the head of the spear. The incisions are parallel marks that encircle the shaft and make usually three, sometimes two or four or five, parallel bands. About three and one-half inches from the incisions which differentiate the head from the shaft a second string of bands is found. The shaft is almost [531] always painted with red ocher and the point usually painted yellow. The incised bands are red or black, with occasional white bands.

Variety 2a.—A hafted, cane, one-pronged, unbarbed wooden spear used for hunting and fighting. Its measurements are the same as those of Variety 1. The hafted head is made from light wood sharpened to a point and about three to three feet six inches in length. The hafting end is sharpened and pushed into the central hollow of the cane and wrapped and tied with

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

pandanus leaf fiber. The handle end has the usual small hole for the spear-thrower and is usually unwrapped and without resin. 411

Variety 2b.—This type is in all respects much the same as Variety 2a, except that it is only fifty-seven inches long. The hard-wood head is about thirteen inches in length and hafted to the shaft. The spear-thrower end is always strengthened with a covering of resin or beeswax. It is painted white at both ends for a distance of six inches. [531]

Variety 3.—The spear with a one-pronged, flat, wooden-bladed head is used almost entirely for fighting. Shaft and blade are composed of light wood. The spear varies in length from eight feet four inches to eight feet nine inches, with a norm of eight feet four inches. The blade length has a fourteen-inch norm and is two inches in width. The blade is slightly convex, pointed, both edges being sharpened. There are usually two or three bands incised around the blade at the hafting end. Shaft and blade are painted with red ocher. The blade is further decorated with painted cross-hatchings, dots, or bands of white clay. The handle end usually has a six-inch covering of the same material. This spear also has a socket for the articulation of the spear-thrower. [531]

Variety 4a.—One-pronged spear, barbed on one side. This spear has two subvarieties: (a) the so-called "lace" spear (man'-daj-pi), and (b) a plain barbed spear. The former derives its name and its distinction from the latter type from the fact that the barbs are only partly cut through the head, a series of parallel perforations continuing the demarcation of the barb and creating a lace-like appearance. The holes are about three-eighths of an inch in diameter and about the same distance from each other.

Variety 4b.—This spear type has the entire barb about a half inch in length cut through the blade. The larger of this size of spear has a barb measuring about three-quarters of an inch in length at the sharpened end of the head, and one and three-quarters inch near the part of the head which is hafted to the shaft. The normal length of this type is nine feet, which varies from six inches longer to six inches shorter. The lace spear head has a norm of twenty-two inches and a variation range of twenty to twenty-six inches. The shaft is about one-half inch in diameter. The material from which these spears are made is usually ironwood. This wood is preferred, but frequently lighter stringy bark is used. The head and shaft are of one piece, but resin is placed at the junction of the two. This at first appears to be mere imitation of the usual hafting in deference to an aesthetic feeling that there should be a demarcation of the head from the shaft. A more careful investigation shows that the resin has real functional significance since it is used to weight the head and to give the spear more perfect balance.

The barbs of this type of spear are usually first given a complete coat of black or red. Lateral bands of light color, white or yellow, are added, which presents an alternation of the dark undercovering and the light overcolor. [531]

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

411 [531] Usually the "body" of the blade is given a coat of white paint. The shaft is ornamented with red ocher. The red ocher is smeared on with the hand, but the other colors are applied to the spear with the aid of a chewed twig or a human-hair brush.

Variety 5.—This spear has a much larger head than any other found among the Murngin, and has a number of forms. Its normal length is about eight feet, with a range from six feet six inches to nine feet. The head is normally thirty-three inches in length, with a variation from thirty inches to thirty-five inches. Its width is ordinarily about three-quarters of an inch. The blade is flat on both sides; it may be barbed on one or both edges. The spear may be made of one whole piece, or the wooden head may be hafted to the shaft. Usually it is unhafted, and hafting takes place only if the shaft or head breaks. The wood is normally stringy bark.

The form which has barbs on only one side of the blade has two or three barbs which project at an angle from the point, and usually the barbs nearest the haft are cut to curve upward toward the point of the spear. The barbs of this form of Variety 5 are exceptionally long, measuring from a normal six inches in length to seven inches. The barb at the more distal end of the head varies from three and one-half inches to seven inches in length, but ordinarily is about five inches long. The heads are highly [531] painted in reds, yellows, whites, and blacks. Usually the barbs are white or yellow and the blade red.

The form which has barbs on two sides of the blade also has two, three, and occasionally four barbs on either side. Generally all point away from the distal end; the barbs nearest the hafting may or may not curve distally. The spear is banded in the same style and colors as the form barbed on only one side. This spear is used almost entirely for fighting; but of recent years it has gone out of general use and is now made rather for the aesthetic joy of carving and painting it.

Type II, Subtype A.—A bilaterally barbed spear with two prongs, each with small barbs on only one side of each prong. It is used only for fighting and dueling. The total length of the spear is four feet two inches to five feet two inches. The haft end, of hard wood, has a fourteen-inch norm with a variation of from twelve to fifteen inches. The hafting is done in the usual way by splitting the shaft, thinning the hafting end of the spear head, and finally wrapping the articulation with fiber string and coating it with beeswax. The head, including the prongs, is painted white, as well as [531] the end of the shaft, which is ruddled its entire distance.

Type II, Subtype B.—A two- to four-pronged spear, with barbs cut on both sides of the prongs. It has a length of about four feet ten inches to five feet ten inches. The prongs have a sixteen-inch norm and vary from fifteen inches to twenty-nine inches. The barbs turn inward and are small and sharp. The hafting is the same as for the other spears. Additional strength is given the spear by wrapping the prongs about one-third their length with

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

fiber string to keep the impact with the target from spreading the prongs and splitting the shaft. This spear is used only for fishing. When the natives are able to procure them, they sharpen small iron rods and substitute them for the wooden prongs.

C. *Sting-ray Spears.*—The barbed prongs found on the tail of the sting-ray are kept by the native hunter. After he has gathered anywhere from twelve to thirty, he attaches them to the end of a seven-foot shaft. The hafting is done with resin and a wrapping of fiber string. Beeswax is never used. The prongs are so arranged that they present a semicircular set of points to the enemy when thrown. This spear is used only for fighting.

All fighting and hunting spears are used without alteration in the various ceremonies. A challenge spear, however, is especially made for one particular purpose and functions in no other way. The native takes the usual small-size cane-shaft spear (Variety 2b), paints it with alternating bands of light and dark paint, and wraps it with feathered fiber string. Two tassels are hung on the handle end. Two of these spears are sent the enemy as a challenge to an open fight.[3]

A toy spear is used by the small boys and thrown without the use of a spear-thrower. It has, therefore, no hole for articulation at its handle end. Instead of a point, it has a wad of paper bark tied with fiber string at its distal end to prevent injury to an opponent. Sometimes feathers are added as ornaments. This spear is sometimes only a straight stick without the paper-bark covering.

Clubs

The Murngin do not possess the smaller clubs found farther south in Australia, nor do they have any type of throwing club. All clubs found here in the north are of the large type, are used for striking a blow, and do not leave the hand when in use.

The two main types of clubs are: (1) the flat-bladed type, and (2) the bird-headed or jabiru-headed type. The first has two subtypes. The jabiru form has been given this name because it both looks like and is painted to represent a jabiru's head. Its shaft, a cylinder two inches in diameter, is about four and one-half feet long. It weighs about four pounds. The head of the club is about one inch long and joins the shaft at almost right angles. The trunk and root of the mangrove tree are used as raw material. The root is used for the head, and the trunk becomes the shaft. The shaft is painted red and white. A small hole is cut in the head and the edge painted to represent a bird's eye. The "beak" of the bird club head is sharpened and used as a hook or pick. The fighter gets the head of the club behind his antagonist, pulls it quickly forward, and hits him on the back of the neck;

[3] See the chapter on Murngin Warfare for a further description of the way this spear is used.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

411 or the weapon is used to peck the face of his opponent. This club is used very little, the flat-bladed type being preferred.

The flat-bladed type of club is normally about fifty-four inches in length, but varies from a minimum of fifty inches to a maximum of over fifty-six inches. It is three and one-half to four and one-half inches wide, and from one-half to three-quarters of an inch in thickness. It is made of ironwood and weighs between three or four pounds. The upper and lower sides of the blade are convex and taper to two knife-like edges which end in a sharp point. The shaft is only about two and a quarter inches wide. The plain butt end of the shaft distinguishes the first subtype. The second subtype has an incision of about three-quarters of an inch at the butt end of the shaft to represent the tail of a fish. Both subtypes are painted with red ocher and occasionally covered with geometric designs. [531]

The flat-bladed type of club is used only in hand-to-hand encounters. A man's opponent is struck with the knife-like edge. The blow is usually directed at the head. Men generally use them, but women also use them occasionally to help their male relatives in a fight. It is not considered a woman's weapon.

A woman's yam stick is also used as a club by a man who finds himself without a hitting weapon during a camp brawl.

These northeastern Arnhem Land people have no shields with which to defend themselves against club or spear. The club itself is usually used as a parrying stick, just as the spear-thrower is used against the spear.

Boomerangs

The boomerang, which is usually thought of as a weapon characteristic of Australia, is not used as a throwing instrument in this area, except in the southern regions. Its only function in the northern clans is to beat time in certain of the ceremonies. In the south it is never used for hunting, and seldom for fighting. I saw several scores of fights and a large number of makarata (duels), but only once did I see a boomerang used and this by some people who had come from the far interior.

4. Canoes and Tools for Sailing Them

396 *Bark Canoe* (*buer-warn*).—The initial step in constructing a bark canoe is to cut the bark of a eucalyptus tree first around the bottom of the trunk and then at the top, split it down the center, and remove it as for house building. The outer surface is then cleaned and straightened, usually with the aid of a spear head used as a knife or with a stone hatchet.

The bark is then held in a fire and further straightened. It is next shaped so that the inner side of the bark becomes the outside of the canoe. This is done by putting two logs on each side of the fire and using them as wedges to push the bark into shape. The bark is creased down the center to form a wedge-shaped canoe. The ends are then sewn with a

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

396 The natives then go over the boat with their iron hatchets, chop away any of the burned material and smooth the surface. The sides of the canoe are chipped on the inside as well as the outside. They are approximately an inch to an inch and a half thick along the gunwales and to about half way down, where they gradually increase in thickness. The bottom of the boat is from three to three and a half inches thick. The bow and stern also increase in thickness. It is impossible to tell one end from the other until a hole has been made in the stern for the anchor rope. The outside of the bottom of the boat is rounded and has no keel. There is no carving of any kind on any of the Murngin canoes.

The mast, from six to eight feet in height, is a sapling that has been barked. A notch is made at its top for tying the ropes of the sail.

501 177 Although some of the older men know what an outrigger is, as was demonstrated to the writer by drawings on the sand, no canoe in the area is ever fitted with one. The natives all insisted they never used them. It is impossible to state definitely the reasons for the natives of northeastern Arnhem Land not taking over the outrigger; the only reason given by them was that the canoe did not need it, and it was just as good without one. It is possible that their resistance to cultural traits generally, and particularly to any trait that causes extra labor, explains their lack of appreciation of the outrigger. Until the introduction of the dugout they had been using a bark canoe which did not possess the outrigger, and it is likely that their old pattern of behavior had such a strong hold upon them that the outrigger was not adopted.

501 In the interior part of the Murngin country the people do not possess boats of any description but use a specially constructed bark bundle, large enough to support one or two individuals, as a raft to cross streams. This type of raft is also used when the men wish to fish in the middle of a stream.

Paddles.—Paddles are made from light wood, usually stringy bark. The blade is roughly oblong in shape; and although the handle and blade are of one piece, the division between the two is indicated either by a sharp flare of the blade from the handle, or, rarely, by the top of the blade forming a right angle with the handle.

Paddles usually are five to five and one-half feet long, with the blade about two feet and the handle three. The blade width has about a four-inch norm. The handle is carved in the form of a cylinder. Sometimes the end of the handle has a square knob for a hand hold. The top and bottom of the blade are convex; the edges of the blades are very thin.

One type of blade tapers at the distal end, whereas the other has a squared end. Although the paints dissolve immediately in water, the natives often paint their paddles for the mere pleasure of decorating them and seeing their beauty. [531]

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

Usually when the trap is to be used an old man goes out into the swamp and stirs the fish up by walking around in the morass of ferns and moss. While he does this he feels with his toes in the mud and water at the roots of the fern trees for small fresh-water turtles and prawns.

6. Other Implements

Digging Stick.—The digging stick is used only by women and carried by them. It is normally about four feet long, but varies from three to six feet. It is made of ironwood and is sharpened at both ends. It is used by the women to dig for yams, roots, small lizards and marsupials. They also use it as a weapon in a camp brawl.

Fire Drills and Fire.—The only means of making fire possessed by the Murngin is the fire drill. The drill is composed of two parts, a hearth and a drill stick. The latter is carved into a cylinder, and the former is a rod flattened on one side and convex on the other. The normal length of both drill and hearth is two feet, but sometimes reaches three feet. The hearth is about one-half to one inch wide.

A small hole is cut in the hearth and an incision made so that when a spark is formed by the friction of the whirling drill it may be tipped out quickly. The drill stick is frequently incised with parallel lines. Both pieces are covered with red ocher.

When fire is to be made, dry paper bark is crumbled and formed into a small ball which can be held in the palm of the hand. A tiny bit of charcoal is placed in the hole in the hearth. The fire-maker squats over the stick, holding it in place with his feet while he whirls the drill with his hands. The end of the drill in contact with the hearth is slightly rounded; intense friction is created by rubbing the charcoal against the dry wood of the hearth. When a spark appears it is dumped into the ball of paper bark and blown on by the native or swung back and forth in the wind until the paper bark has caught fire.

Fire sticks are the permanent equipment of both men and women and are nearly always found in the personal baskets of each. They are not used, however, every time a man wishes to make a new fire, for fire brands of the inner core of a pandanus which burns like punk are usually carried by the men when they go on journeys.

When fire is to be used for cooking larger game such as emu, kangaroo, dugong, and turtle, a slight hole is excavated in the ground. Round smooth river stones about the size of a man's two fists are gathered and placed in the fire in the shallow pit. Sticks are put on top of them so that the fire continues burning. Dampened paper bark or green leaves are then placed on the fire. Large chunks of meat are put on top of the green leaves, then an upper covering of leaves and paper bark is added to prevent the direct contact of the fire from burning the meat and also to help steam the food. The hole is covered with sand so that a kind of earth oven has been made.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

778 grinding stone. The latter is a flat stone about five inches by one-half to 532 one inch. Both are painted.

534 *Bull Roarers.*—Bull roarers are always made by older men. A flat slip of 322 wood is first hacked out of a piece of eucalyptus into a rectangular shape. It is then whittled down into a thin sword-shaped instrument and given a smooth surface. If the bull roarer is not sufficiently straight to suit the maker, he heats it over a small fire, puts it into the fork of a tree and straightens it by applying pressure.

534 For decorating the bull roarer the wood is first given a covering of the juice from a macerated orchid bulb. Red ocher is then rubbed over the 531 entire surface and a white clay snake design traced down each side. Often human blood is smeared over the snake design as an adhesive for white bush cotton or feathers. Sometimes the entire surface of the bull roarer is covered with feathers or cotton and the snake design traced with blood down each side of the instrument. A long rope of human hair is attached for the purpose of whirling the bull roarer about the user's head.

There are two types of bull roarers.

Type I. Mandel-prindi.—This is a flat, leaf-shaped instrument, slightly convex on both sides, with a hole in the narrower end for the insertion of two strands of hair string. The hair string is eight to ten feet long and is tied at the other end to a cylindrical handle twenty-six inches in length and two inches in diameter. The whole of the blade of the bull roarer is covered with red ocher or human blood, and painted. It also has birds' down on it.

534 The mandelprindi is whirled by the natives during the Gunabibi ceremony and is supposed to be the thunder which is the voice of the Great Snake totem.

Measurements:

Length: three-foot norm; variation six inches.

Width: three inches, widest part; one inch, narrowest part.

Type II. Paddle or Bird Type of Bull Roarer.—This form has the same shape as a paddle with a rounded end. It is slightly larger than the other bull roarer. It is looked upon as entirely different from mandelprindi, and its sound is supposed to be the voice of a bird. A hole is bored in the cylindrical handle to receive the end of the hair string.

Banitja.—These sacred sound-producing objects are long graduated strips of paper bark wrapped with pandanus fiber and covered with red ocher. They are used to beat the ground to warn and frighten women away from the ceremonial ground. They measure three feet by four inches by two inches.

534 *Yermerlindi.*—Two saplings are cut down and tied together. They are 531 padded with grass and tied with fiber string. The front half of the surface thus produced is covered with paper bark and rewrapped with thick fiber string. The surface of the paper bark is covered with human blood and

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

white birds' down is stuck on it. A red snake is painted with human blood from the bottom to the top of the emblem. On the top of the Yermerlindi is put a native companion feather headdress to symbolize the snake's head. The whole of the object is supposed to be the great totem snake. It is used only in the Gunabibi ceremony.

The Yermerlindi measures sixteen feet by one foot by seven and one-half inches.

Hollow Cylindrical Objects.—All such objects are made from trees whose centers have been eaten out by termites until only a hollow shell remains. The size of the tree used depends on the purposes for which the object is required.

The native walks through a eucalyptus grove thumping trees until he finds one whose sound indicates that it is hollow. The tree is ringed a few feet from the ground. When the tree falls the trunk is cut the proper length. A pole is then cut and used as a ramrod to clean the termite nest out of the interior.

The outer and inner bark are next cleaned off with an axe and any remaining pieces of bark scraped from the surface with the axe edge.

These hollow cylinders divide into three types: (1) ir-a-ki (wooden trumpet); (2) u-var (ceremonial drum); and (3) dai-mer-i ("coffin").

Iraki: There are three varieties of this object. The first is the ordinary long trumpet, which is about four feet long with a diameter of two and one-half inches. The smaller end of the log is made into a mouthpiece by whittling slightly.

A second type is much larger (six to eight feet long; six inches in diameter). It is used exclusively as a ceremonial object in the Djungguan ceremony. It represents Bapa Indi (father great), the Great Snake. Beeswax is put at the small end to form a mouthpiece.

The third type, which is seldom seen, is about two feet long and two and one-half inches in diameter. A hole is bored through the wall into the inner tube. The blower, instead of putting his lips at one end of the trumpet, places his mouth over the hole and blows. The sound is low and unformed.

Uvar: This drum is only a hollow log with no modification except painting. It ranges from four to six feet in length and is from seven to eight inches in diameter. It is beaten with a drum stick of pandanus leaves wrapped with the same material. The uvar is carried under the arm of a dancer in the Ulmark ceremony and is used at no other time. The sound made by the beating is the voice of the snake.

Daimeri: This coffin may be either a simple hollow cylinder or it may have two barbed prongs at the top. The length varies from six to fifteen feet, and the prongs from one and one-half to two feet. The diameter is about nine inches. Two holes directly opposite each other represent eyes of a mythical creature.

1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929)1937
OI 17 Murngin OI 17

765 [532] A foot below the "eyes" a band a half-inch wide is incised around the cylinder to represent the cicatrice on a native man's or woman's body.

The bones of the dead after exhumation are placed inside the coffin, a hole is dug a foot or so in the ground, and the log placed upright in the hole.

764 [531] *Grave Posts.*—A tree is felled and a log of the appropriate length cut from it. The post may be uncarved or a series of incisions may be made at the top of it to give it the appearance of a carved "head" with one or more necks.

The grave posts are placed over the grave of the dead, or they may be erected in the camp of a mourner to express his feeling of sorrow for the loss of his relation.

Measurements:

Length: adult, four to five feet; child, three and one-half feet.

Diameter: three to six inches.

765 [531] *Bark Coffin.*—The inner bark of a stringy-bark tree is soaked with water and heated over a fire, then formed into a cylinder with the inside of the bark turned out. It is stuffed with grass to keep it in shape and prevent it from splitting. The bones are placed in it and its two edges sewn together with pandanus fiber and a bone awl. The whole surface is covered with red ocher and painted with the totemic design of the deceased. The coffin is two feet long and four or five inches in diameter.

778 *Plank Ranga.*—Floating planks brought in on the tide, possibly from New Guinea, are of special totemic significance, and some of them are made into rangas by painting a design on them. The boards of a modern European box are now sometimes used in the same manner.

292 287 *Bark Belts.*—A strip of stringy bark about two inches in width, with a circumference great enough to reach about the body of a man, is soaked in water and held over a fire to make it pliable and to smooth its surface. It is then bent into its permanent shape and tied around the wearer. The ends are tied with fiber string and the belt is held in place by knotting the strings across the abdomen of the wearer. The belts are painted and used in ceremonies.

765 [531] *Mourning Mast.*—The mast is supposed to represent the one used by the Malay in their sailing vessels when they visited southern Arafura waters.

The mast is made from a long eucalyptus sapling and is about fourteen and a half feet high and three inches in diameter. The tree is barked first and then cut to leave a protruding oblong band around the circumference a third of the way from the top. The band is decorated with the totemic designs of the deceased. Fiber strings are tied to the top of the post and represent mast ropes.

796 *Barnumbir Stick.*—A stick about the length of a spear is cut with a diameter of three-quarters of an inch and is sharpened at one end. It is

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7
TASMANIANS OI 19

1

ABORIGINAL ART OF AUSTRALIA

M
531 ●

THE BASIC ART of the Australian aborigines consists of abstract geometric designs, which cannot be interpreted without the aid of the artist who produced them. This art form covers the greater part of the continent. In three areas—the Hawkesbury River basin, with Sydney as a centre, north-western Australia and Arnhem Land—this simple form has been overlaid by a more advanced naturalistic art in which identifiable paintings of animals, birds, fish, reptiles and human beings predominate.

M
532*
171

For many years it was thought that the Tasmanian aborigines had no form of artistic expression. Recently, however, discoveries of rock engravings have been made in three different localities—Mount Cameron West, Devonport and Trial Harbour.[1] Those at Mount Cameron West were cut into a soft calcareous limestone, but those at Devonport and Trial Harbour are in much harder materials, the former in diabase, the latter in granite. The designs, which are made up of circles, concentric circles and straight lines, are similar to those the aborigines carved in the rocks on some parts of the mainland. The Tasmanians also painted designs on sheets of bark.[2]

M
532*
171
T
532
171

Victoria and southern New South Wales are poor in examples of aboriginal art. No rock engravings have been found in Victoria, and only four localities of cave paintings are known. Three of these are in the western part of the state and the fourth in the Lake Tyers area of Gippsland.[3] Though there is a paucity of cave paintings, however, the engravings made by the aborigines on their shields and spear-throwers indicate that they possessed an unusual ability for decorative design. The Victorians, like the Tasmanians, also painted designs on the walls of their bark shelters.[4]

M
532*
171

The dominant art in south-eastern South Australia and western New South Wales is that of the rock engravings, of which many thousands have been discovered.[5] Although the designs are similar to those of the Tasmanians, the technique of producing them was different. Whereas the Tasmanian engravings appear to have been cut or pounded with a boulder, those in South Australia were made by striking the surface of the rock with a sharp-cornered pebble, producing a series of pits, or indentations. In some instances the subject is only outlined, in others the whole design is removed to the depth of a few millimetres. There are a few rock engravings in the soft Miocene limestone which forms the banks of the River Murray.[6] These engravings resemble those at Mount Cameron

1. Lucksman (1950), p. 25.
2. Péron (1807), Pl. 15; Bonwick (1857), pp. 49-50.
3. Davidson (1936), p. 77.
4. Smyth (1878), vol. I, p. 292.
5. Mountford (1935), pp. 207-13.
6. Sharad (1927), pp. 137-40.

[p. 2 is blank]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 CE17 Maragia CE17

be gathered only by the *dua* men who give it to those of the opposite moiety. Yellow, *kadangul*, and black, *tjunapul*, come from localities near Gurunga.[43] The collection of the yellow pigments is associated with a ceremony in which men of the *jiritja* moiety only can take part. The *jiritja* distribute these pigments to the *dua* men.

At Oenpelli, most of the colours are obtained by trade. The best red ochre, *gunaitdai*, comes from a totemic place, Widitjan, about eight days journey south. If this ochre is in short supply, the aborigines use an inferior local ochre. For white, the aborigines use a stone, *outjain* (unidentified), which they first grind into a paste and, when it is partly dry, mould into small cakes. In this form, the pigment is traded over long distances. The yellow ochre, *maraguarum*, which is soft and easily ground, comes from some unidentified place to the far south. I did not gather any details about the source of the black, called *mammi-jangarin*. Apparently it is in short supply because it is rare in both the bark and cave paintings of the Oenpelli area.

Throughout Arnhem Land the pigments are ground, with water, on rough flat stones. One stone is generally reserved for the white pigment. Cockle and small bailer shells are often used as paint pots. Both Tindale[44] and Spencer[45] state that the aborigines mix their pigments to get different shades. At the time of my visit to Groote Eylandt, Yirrkalla and Oenpelli the aborigines were not mixing their colours, the different pebbles of red and yellow ochres accounting for the varying shades of red and yellow in the paintings.

(ii) FIXATIVE

The juice of one of the tree orchids (*Dendrobium* sp.) is used by the Arnhem landers as a fixative on both the bark and the cave paintings. The orchid bulb is cut in halves, broken slightly by chewing, and, in the Oenpelli and Yirrkalla areas, rubbed directly on the bark or rock surface, or in Groote Eylandt, mixed with the colour on the grinding stone. This method of holding the colour is effective as long as the pigments are applied thinly; if not, they tend to flake off.

(iii) BRUSHES

The aboriginal artists of Arnhem Land use three kinds of brushes:

(a) A narrow strip of bark, chewed at one end (Fig. 3F). This is held as in Fig. 3C and used for the broad lines.

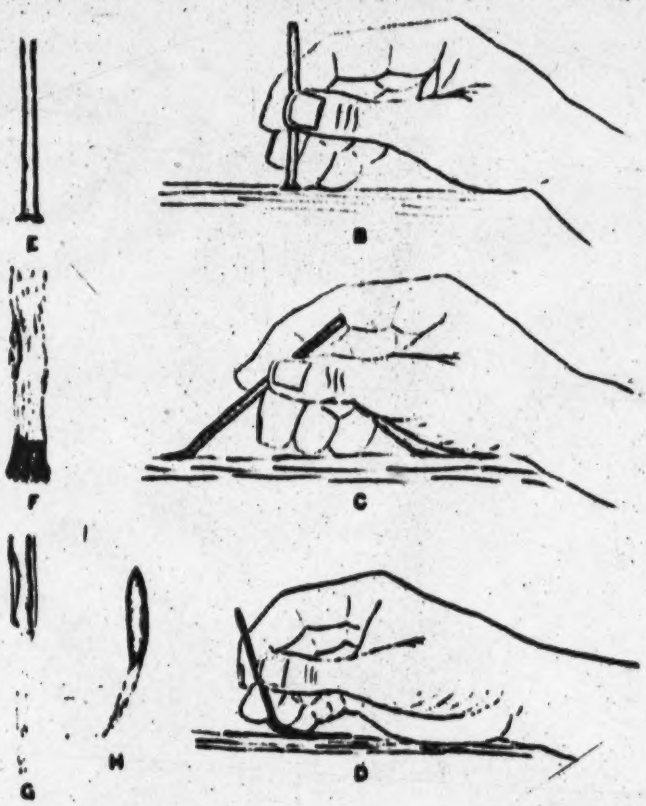
(b) A cylindrical stick (Fig. 3E), about three thirty-seconds of an inch in diameter, and three inches long, which has the end slightly burred. With this the artist makes the dots. The brush is tapped on the grinding stone to load it with colour, which is transferred to the painting with the brush held as shown in Fig. 3B.

43. See myth of Gurunga, p. 371.
44. Tindale (1926), p. 117.
45. Spencer (1928), p. 792.

31 Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OI17 Murngin OI17

531
413

(c) The third brush, made either from a few fibres of a palm leaf (Fig. 3G) or a small feather (Fig. 3A) demands considerable skill in its use. It is long and flexible, resembling the lining brush used by coach painters and sign-writers.



Jean Traurau

FIG. 3. Techniques and tools of bark and cave painting

The brush is held delicately between the fingers, as in Fig. 3D, and drawn away from the body. The fine cross-hatching and lining in the north-eastern art, and the broken and parallel lines of Groote Eylandt, are all made with this brush. It is called *marait* by the Oenpelli people.[48] The skill which the aborigines have achieved in the use of this brush is remarkable. Pl. 155A of Orion and the Pleiades is a good example.

48. Pl. 3B shows an aboriginal painting with this brush.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Muragin O117

(iv) SHEETS OF BARK

The bark sheets were stripped from one of the local stringy-barks (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*). After having selected a tree of a size suitable for his purpose, and one free from knots and cracks, the aboriginal first made two cuts round the circumference of the tree, usually about three feet apart, then, loosening a strip of bark at the lower cut, pulled it upward, leaving a narrow vertical opening. Into this opening the native inserted the point of a sharpened stick, and gently levered the bark from the tree. The whole operation usually occupied about three minutes. The aboriginal then threw the bark, rough outer surface downward, on a large fire for a short time, after which he stripped off the outer fibrous bark until the inner denser portion was about three-sixteenths of an inch thick. In this condition the bark, being particularly flexible, was easily flattened by levelling a patch of sand, placing the bark on top, covering it with more sand, and leaving it until dry. The drying took several days to a fortnight, depending on the humidity of the atmosphere. Normally, these bark sheets were used for building the wet-weather shelters (Pl. 3A) on the inside of which the aborigines spent much of their spare time painting pictures.[47]

The method which I adopted was to ask the men to make bark paintings for me, seldom suggesting a subject. At the end of the day, the artists brought their work to my tent, related the associated myth, and explained the meanings of the designs. Under normal tribal conditions, most of the bark paintings are the result of idle hours, when the artist depicts subjects in which he is most interested. But this is not always so. In the Milingimbi and Oenpelli areas, the old men paint designs on sheets of bark which illustrate secret totemic myths. These are exhibited to the novitiates during their initiation and age-grading ceremonies.[48]

5. THE ARTISTS

Some writers suggest that only a limited number of aboriginal men are employed as artists.[49] This is not so. All men were willing to and could paint, although, naturally, some are more skilled than others. The men shown on Pl. 4 produced bark paintings that belonged to Groote Eylandt, Yirrkalla, Oenpelli and Liverpool River areas respectively.

Pl. 4B is *Nangapiana* from Groote Eylandt, who with his relatives, *Tutaluru* and *Juliauru*, produced many fine bark paintings. Pl. 21E and Pl. 25B are the work of *Nangapiana*. *Mini-mini*, mentioned by Adam,[50] also made a number of paintings. He did not, however, employ the fine brushwork of *Nangapiana*, although the results were attractive and colourful. Pl. 30C is *Mini-mini's* work.

47. As the supply of prepared sheets of bark at Yirrkalla and Oenpelli became exhausted, I provided the artists with sheets of rough-surfaced dark grey and green paper. The paintings on these sheets of paper can be distinguished in the illustrations by the smooth ground.
48. Warner (1937), p. 318; also p. 224.
49. Adam (1951), p. 163.
50. Adam (1951), p. 164.

3; Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oll7 Muragia Oll7

Pl. 4A is *Mawwulan*, one of a group of artists from Yirrkalla, who produced many attractive bark paintings (Pl. 99A, 85E). He also carved the wooden figures of *Tjumbumai* (Pl. 130A, B), *Mulwulwi* (Pl. 133A, B), and others. 531 [115]

Pl. 4C is *Kumutun*, an old Kakadu aboriginal,[51] one of the last of the original inhabitants of Oenpelli. This man was a storehouse of aboriginal beliefs and mythological stories. Pl. 55D and Pl. 70B are his work.

Pl. 4D is an aboriginal, *Walkini*, from the Liverpool River area. He was younger than many of the other artists in the group. He produced Pl. 72D, Pl. 73A, and many others.

Although these four men, each in his own locality, painted many attractive pictures, there were many others who were equally skilled. I did not meet an aboriginal who could not, or did not want to paint. There is certainly no special artist class. [463]

In watching these men and others at work, I was impressed by their sureness. They seemed to have a fully conceived picture in their mind before they started to paint; it was seldom that an artist altered a design or corrected a brush stroke.

Although, for the sake of simplicity, I have referred to the designs on bark as paintings it is evident, in a narrower interpretation, that some are paintings, i.e. painting in spaces, and others are brush drawings, that is, the designs are built up by a series of lines. There are also numerous examples in which the figures are first painted and, when dry, details are added in fine lines.

51. This tribe, now almost extinct, was visited by Spencer in 1912.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

4

THE ART OF YIRRKALLA

114 (2) 531

During the eight weeks the expedition camped at Yirrkalla[1] my research was concentrated on bark paintings, carved animal and human figures, and their associated myths.

F. M. Setzler and F. D. McCarthy, while engaged on archaeological research at Milingimbi, collected several painted ceremonial objects from that locality. The Rev. Arthur F. Ellemor also arranged for the aborigines of Milingimbi to make a number of bark paintings for me. These objects and bark paintings from Milingimbi are valuable because they indicate little change in the art forms over north-eastern Arnhem Land. Setzler and McCarthy also assisted me in the interpretation of some of the Yirrkalla bark paintings.

When I returned to Yirrkalla for a short period during 1952 I was able to check the work of other investigators as well as my own. As the art forms of both Yirrkalla and Milingimbi are similar they will be treated as one unit from north-east Arnhem Land.

Barrett[2] figured cave paintings from the Wessel Islands, as well as fish and animals which the aboriginal children moulded in the sand. The Berndts[3] described a series of sacred carved figures from Yirrkalla and later[4] another series of secular carved figures from the same area; they[5] also published a myth of the moon and the words of the song belonging to it. Elkin and the Berndts[6] described a number of bark paintings, carved animal and human figures, and ceremonial objects. It is, however, from Warner's[7] descriptions and analyses of the culture of the aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land that we have learned so much about the mythology, philosophy, social organization and the clan and language groups of north-eastern Arnhem Land. Thomson[8] has described the movement of goods and the trade cycles of eastern Arnhem Land.

1. BARK PAINTINGS, DECORATED OBJECTS AND MYTHS

(1) Human Beings

The Man, Djunkgao

Among the aborigines of Arnhem Land the myths of the *Wawalik* sisters and of the *Djunkgao* form the bases of all the important ceremonies, the myth of the *Wawalik* for the *gunabibi*, *ulmark*, *djunggnan* and *marndiella* rituals, and the myth of *Djunkgao* for the *dua* and *jiritja narra* rituals.[9]

773* 796

1. Map, Fig. 1.
2. Barrett and Croll (1943), p. 70.
3. Berndt (1948), pp. 309-26.
4. Berndt (1949), pp. 213-20, Pl. 1-3.
5. Berndt (1948a), pp. 17-30.
6. Elkin and the Berndts (1950).
7. Warner (1937).
8. Thomson (1949).
9. Warner (1937), p. 241.

[pp. 16-266 not processed]

5: Webb M-5 (ca. 1930) 1934
OII7 Murngin OII7

The soft bark of the giant tea-tree, commonly called paper-bark, is utilised for such purposes as the bandaging of wounds, the protection of spear points, the covering of huts, the carrying of babies, the parcelling of food, and the making of receptacles in which water is carried. 314

Fire is produced by wooden drills. The end of the drill is placed in a notch cut in a piece of soft-wood, which is held on the ground by the foot, and the drill is then spun between the palms of the hands. I have seen fire produced by this means in as short a time as 35 seconds. 372

Large dug-out canoes are made from the trunks of trees of several species, and in these canoes long voyages are made across the open sea. 501

The only musical instruments used, if they may be so termed, are the "Yiraki," or drone-pipe, and the "Bilma," or clap-sticks. The Yiraki is about four feet in length, and is constructed of a piece of wood about three inches in diameter which has been hollowed by termites. At the smaller end a mouthpiece is formed of beeswax. This instrument supplies a droning accompaniment during the singing of chants. No tune upon it is possible, its range being limited to three notes of the scale, which are produced by a variation of the wind pressure. 534

The Bilma are simply two pieces of hardwood, oval in section, and about one foot in length, which, being struck together, supply the "time" for chants and dances.

Sometimes two boomerangs are held in the one hand, separated by one or more fingers, and by a quick movement of the wrist are made to produce a rhythmic rattling.

In the manufacture of these various weapons and utensils a high degree of constructive skill and neatness of workmanship is evidenced. Practically all these articles are richly ornamented, and probably nowhere in Australia has aboriginal decorative art reached a finer development than in East Arnhem Land. 531

6: Berndt E-5 (1946-1947) 1951
OI17 Murngin OI17

142
291
302
516
531

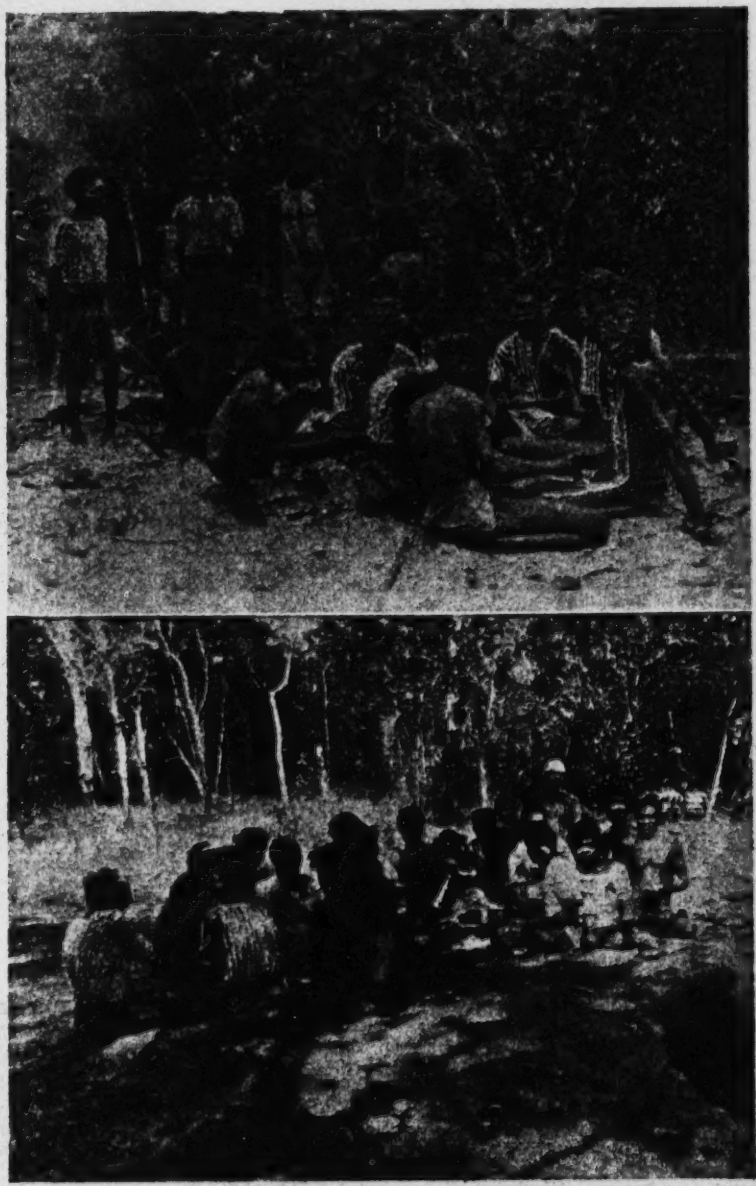


PLATE V.

[Facing p. 33]

142
292
531
302
231

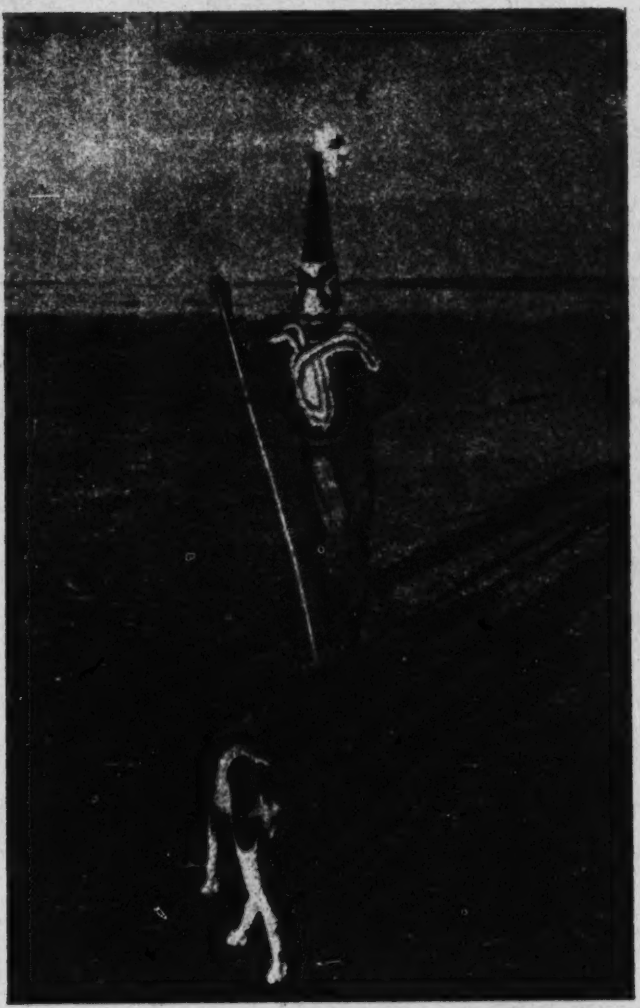


PLATE XV

[p. 84(F)]

[For caption see category 116, p. xiii]

Significance of the Djanggawul

There seem to have been, originally, several basic types: the *djuda*, or tree *rangga*, from which trees sprang up when the *rangga* was plunged into the ground by the Djanggawul; the *manwulan*, or stick used by the Djanggawul Brother as a 'walking stick', which he plunged into the ground so that spring water gushed forth; the *ganinjari*, 'yam' or walking stick (sometimes confused with the *manwulan*), carried by the Sisters, and used for obtaining water in the same way;[1] and the *djanda*, or tail of the goanna, with the same function as the *manwulan*, derived from the goanna seen by the Djanggawul on arrival at Jelangbara, Port Bradshaw.

These original forms have been elaborated into a variety of *rangga* emblems. They include various poles or objects of totemic *wongar* origin, related directly or indirectly to the Djanggawul; *rangga* symbolizing vulva or vagina, penis or testes; stone *rangga*, derived from a stone which was removed from the vagina of the younger Sister; and conventionalized representations of the Djanggawul themselves, for example, the *wirlgul* (younger Sister) *rangga* or the *gungman* (elder Sister) *rangga*. All of these are decorated with clan patterns derived from those originally given by the Djanggawul[2] to the 'new generation' which emerged from the Sisters' uteri; and most have attached to them feathered string—the red parakeet feathers symbolizing the rays of the sun, the red sky at sunset, or blood from the Sisters. They are used in dancing on the sacred ground, and in posturing before the sacred shade or hut; the latter symbolizes the uterus or *ngainmara* mat, and in it *rangga* are stored just as were the first *rangga* in the beginning. Parakeet feathered string was also among the objects brought by the Djanggawul.

All these objects, then, have symbolic significance, and relate to the basic theme of Djanggawul ritual and mythology. This theme is fertility, manifested in the perpetually pregnant Women, the Two Sisters, in the growth of trees and foliage, in the creation of running springs, and in the abiding and life-giving warmth of the sun's rays. It reflects the Aborigines' fundamental reliance on the products of their natural environment, and their emphasis on the procreation of human and animal life, the continuance of their own species and of the food which supplies them with sustenance. They see the theme of fertility mirrored in their surroundings, and in the rhythmic sequence of the seasons, and recognize their own dependence on these and on other natural phenomena for their very being.

[1] The two Sisters are also said to have urinated in various places, making sometimes small streams, and sometimes pools or wells: in the latter case, the well itself is often likened to their vaginae.

[2] *Vide* A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, pp. 28–41.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

honour; sickness overtakes the offender, or the father may spear him.

New spears, knives, axes, and canoes are sometimes pronounced sacred and thereby impregnated by tabu. Custom provides for the use of such articles in inter-tribal presentations, and any responsible man may prepare them and paint his horde's totem on them. Nanyan, a youth of the Gerrkee horde, spent most of his time at Yirrkala, and I watched him make a spear and 'declare' it sacred. But the tabu could not be completed till he had killed with it, and when he speared a kangaroo it automatically became tabu to all but the men of his horde. After the meat had been eaten the oldest man present completed the ceremony by painting totemic symbols on it for Nanyan. He prized his spear and used it for a time in hunting; and because it had been ceremonially 'painted', the tabu was under control, and women and children of his own horde were allowed to eat meat killed with it, though on no account could the kill be shared with females from other hordes.

Nanyan later presented his spear to a man of the Kumite horde who had no totemic or marriage link with the Gerrkee. This 'alien' appreciated the courtesy and used the spear freely in the hunt, but only the initiated men could eat the food, the women and children not being allowed to share in the kill, because their horde had no associations with the spear's totemic centre. Finally the spear was formally returned to Nanyan who put it to normal use in procuring food for himself and family.

On patrol I visited a horde camped among the casuarinas near Caledon Bay, and in the evening saw the men return with a canoe loaded with fish. During the unloading I noticed that the women and children deliberately kept away and ignored the splendid haul, and I was told that the canoe

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

and everything connected with it, including fish, turtle, and other food carried in it, were tabu to women and children. It appeared that two days previously the horde had migrated from the south and had brought a skeleton in the canoe, thereby rendering it tabu to women and children. It was another case of mumbakuta.

Sons and sons-in-law of the deceased person brought the fish ashore and ate them around a totemic well scooped in the sand. The leavings were carefully buried in the 'well' and the customary fire lit over them. The camp then went to the canoe on the beach, lit a fire on the sand, and taking leafy branches held them in the smoke and switched them over the canoe to hunt off the ghost of the dead man. Once the skeleton's influence on the canoe was removed, it was safe to travel in, and food could be eaten from it.

Skeletons are customarily carried in bark parcels and exert far-reaching influences, and 'mali', or ghosts, accompanying such bones must be placated. In an exchange I made with Yama for his father's bones (which I wanted to send to the Sydney Museum), I bartered several items for the complete skeleton in its bark cylinder with his horde's totemic symbols painted on the outside. Unknown to me, there were two powerful influences in the bark parcel, one in the bones and the other in the totemic symbols on the bark itself; for such bones laid a tabu on all they touched, just as they would have done if carried in a canoe, and the bark cylinder, by having a totemic sign painted on it, was sacred. Among the items I had exchanged for the skeleton was an axe, so it was agreed that for ceremonial purposes, this should absorb the tabu from the bones and also from the bark cylinder. Thereafter only the nearest relatives could touch it. To remove the skeleton tabu from the axe, Yama cut open a tree containing a bee's nest. Because of the tabu, only fully initiated men of the horde could eat it; but after the meal, the axe was painted to make it

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

779 Totems in sacred ceremonies are known as 'maraian', and generally denote some utensil used by the Ancestors. Maraian may also be birds, animals, or fish intimately linked with the Ancestors. Parts of the nomad's anatomy, representing that of an Ancestor, and usually their reproductive organs, feature in song and dance. Such caricatures are accepted by the nomads, but I have seen consternation and embarrassment amongst mixed parties of white visitors attending these ceremonies.

779 796 614 621 778 Totemic beliefs link widely separated hordes, who meet for ceremonies connected with the creation myth, for bone-burying and for initiations. Several clans may be co-guardians of the same sacred site, such as the Reratjingo of Port Bradshaw and the Lia-gullomirry from the Woolen River, who are separated by about a hundred and fifty miles, yet both belong to the Dua moiety and have close connexions with a sacred well on the Woolen River where a great mythical snake in Creation days distinguished himself by swallowing two of the Ancestresses. Guardianship of this site has been mainly in the hands of the Woolen River horde, but at rare intervals Reratjingo men from Port Bradshaw make their way to the well and take part in the ceremonies. A sacred maraian, consisting of a painted hollow log, represents the snake, and is the centre of the rite, and at certain stages in the proceedings the leader blows through it to produce dull, booming reverberations which are said to be the voice of the snake. An old man of the visiting Reratjingo returned to Port Bradshaw, painted a [178] similar maraian, and introduced the ceremony to his horde; now his sons, grandsons, and nephews carry out the ritual of this totem.

778 531 Some designs and myths, painted on maraian in coloured clays, or bound with string and parrot feathers, involve weeks of careful preparation. A shower of rain will efface the paint, moths may consume the string; the horde leader

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

must memorize the design. Blank spaces on maraian are due to the artist's loss of memory, and they freely admit that they have forgotten some parts of the design.

As well as having a link with the distant Woolen River, the Reratjingo had its own totem centre near Port Bradshaw, and were co-guardians with the Kalpu. But this did not guarantee unity, for the question of guardianship led to quarrels in which several were killed and the Reratjingo withdrawing to Melville Bay forty miles away. But the Kalpu victory was short lived, for in driving off the Reratjingo they so weakened the home-front, that their hereditary enemies, the Juppu of Blue Mud Bay, descended on them with such vindictiveness that the remnant fled to the English Company's Islands eighty miles away, and they have been on the defensive ever since.

Prolonged friendships between hordes does not prevent the sudden cessation of diplomatic relations, and an occasional killing. The Gerrkee from Cape Shield had fraternized, hunted, and camped for years with the Juppa. Though they were of opposite moieties, they exchanged secret law, held totemic dances, and seemed inseparable. Yet one night when I was visiting their camp I saw that they were at loggerheads, and soon afterwards they brandished their spears, attacked each other, yelling threats and obscenities. It all started at the end of a successful day's hunting, when everyone had more than enough to eat and a Juppa woman hit her Gerrkee husband with a digging-stick after a trivial disagreement. He retaliated by knocking her down and bumping her head on the ground. Her father heard her screams, and remonstrated with his son-in-law, who then called on his brothers for assistance. In a flash, both clans were in a fracas. Women used their digging-sticks, or lengths of wood from the camp-fires, and darted in amongst the men to deal their blows. Men slashed with yard-long flat spear-throwers. After an hour of bedlam,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

411 flat strip of wood three feet long and two to three inches wide. It is held between the second and third fingers so that the end of the thrower rests in the palm. At the opposite end there is a short hook, or pointed stub of hardwood, bound firmly in place with string and gum. The end of a spear is slightly concave, so that it fits over the hook on the thrower, which is then extended above and behind the shoulder for the throw. A man's thrust is greatly increased by the spear-thrower, and heavy and light spears are thrown with dangerous accuracy for distances of from forty to eighty yards; I have seen them thrown fifty yards and penetrate six inches into a tough palm tree. A nomad and his mangal are inseparable, and if by chance he loses or breaks his spear, or even finds it inconvenient to carry one, he always carries his spear-thrower. If a spear is unexpectedly thrown at him he has a good chance of throwing it back at his enemy if he has his spear-thrower.

•531 Men use infinite care in painting and decorating themselves, their weapons, and utensils, and in ceremonial life they will spend weeks in making, painting, and decorating totems. Decorative art is limited by an unchanging background of mythology and religion, and sacred designs are passed from father to son to be meticulously reproduced when preparing youths for initiation, or on corpses, skulls, and burial posts. There is little originality in ceremonial artistry, but nomads are not devoid of artistic tendencies and spend a lot of time in decorating weapons and utensils. A woman patiently weaves a dilly-bag and then sets about mixing coloured clays for its decoration; her aesthetic impulse is gratified, although the bag is not improved thereby. Youths decorate play-spears, and they cannot refrain from smearing designs on their bodies if they find moist clay or soft ochre. Men paint pictures of animals, fish, and birds on sheets of bark for pleasure, and when we took horses and

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

cattle to Yirrkala it was not long before their likeness too appeared on bark sheets.

I saw little-known caves on the Wessel Islands, in which totemic myths had been painted side by side with Japanese pearlers, Macassar proas, and odd European wanderers. Rock paintings are common in many parts of Australia, except in Arnhem Land where outcrops of rock are so rare that only three lots of rock paintings have been found. Here the primitive artist uses a bark sheet, which in itself indicates some measure of aesthetic impulse, for it is not easily obtained and has no permanence.

The Serpent in sacred myths is spiritually present in the 'maraian' or log painted with totemic symbols. For ceremonies, the maraian is kept in a bush shelter deep in the scrub, and initiated men guard it till the moment arrives for its dramatic elevation. They push their way through the shelter toward the over-awed initiates, and grovel, shudder, squirm, and roll over and over with strained and contorted faces, as if overcome by dread of the long maraian so carefully borne across their bodies. Wriggling along in the rear, the leader of the ceremony blows through the maraian and produces the low booming sound so feared by women and children and believed to be the voice of the Serpent.

Designs on maraian are made from coloured clays, string, and feathers. Hundreds of yards of string are wound on some of them, and the effect is enhanced by weaving into it white birds'-down, red and green parrots' feathers, or opossum fur. Red ochre-stone from a totem centre on Elcho Island is traded for hundreds of miles, and is in demand because of a greasy property which makes it adhere to the skin. Ordinary clay-paints crack and peel, but this is overcome by crushing orchid stems and smearing the sticky juice over the body before applying the paint. Participants in ceremonies decorate themselves with totemic designs, and glue long lines of white birds'-down on their

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17

bodies. This glue is obtained by cutting a vein in the arm, painting the blood on the skin and adding feathers before it congeals. Paint brushes are made from human hair or from twigs.

I remember watching Wonggu mix his colours in shells, flatten his bark, and prepare his orchid gum. Only then did he realize that he needed a brush, so he leaned over and cut a tuft of hair from his son's head, bound it to a twig and commenced his mural.

A well-known anthropologist stayed with us at Yirrkala and obtained a big selection of aboriginal arts and crafts and bark paintings. He paid the Yulengor well, and they gave full play to their ingenuity, manufacturing such things as bows and arrows which, incidentally, are not used by aborigines. I saw several paintings in the collection in the usual red, yellow, white, and black, together with an additional vivid blue. Not having seen blue before, I could not account for it till later in the day my wife chanced to remark that several of her blue-bags had disappeared.

Body decorations are made by mutilating the skin, and one pleasing mutilation resembles a string of beads on a woman's breast, where each bead is a raised nodule of flesh about the size of a pea. Women and girls scar a pattern on the skin with firesticks, and rub pipeclay into the wound; a more common practice is to cut the marks into the flesh before filling them with clay. For reasons of vanity and custom, a woman has a few cicatrices across her hips, and possibly on her shoulders, and in the event of sorrow she adds some to her midriff. If a brother should die, a sister paints horizontal lines across the backs of her legs below the knees, and when his bones are being collected she substitutes gashes for her clay markings.

It was explained that a man gets a friend to cut the customary perpendicular lines from his shoulder and halfway to his elbow, but he himself makes the more important

283 made on the same principle. Three men each take a length of fibre. They twist them and pass them one to another to form a single length of rope. As the rope lengthens it is passed over the limb of a tree and held taut by a fourth man.

286 Woven pandanus dilly-bags are pleasing and effective
415 examples of artistic workmanship. Sacred bags are small,
[237] but beautifully woven, and are adorned with parrot feathers
[531] or fur and sometimes totemically painted. Women make most of them and some are so closely woven that they hold water. The majority, however, are large work bags which hang down their backs and are used to carry yams, shells, roots, and small animals. Another bag is made from string, is similar to the well-known onion bag, and will hold thirty or forty pounds of yams.

292 The curious 'nganmara' is peculiar to Arnhem Land. It is a
285 house, an umbrella, a garment, a shelter from the wind and
293 rain, a mat on which to sleep, and it is conveniently carried
[513] under the arm. This conical straw umbrella mat is woven from pandanus palm; it is circular, with an apex two feet high, and gives some slight protection from sun, wind, or rain. When the nganmara is thrown open on the ground a woman and child can be completely hidden under it. I first saw an nganmara when I was on the King River, where the woman who had it was hunting with her friends. When I asked her to show me the mat under her arm, she calmly handed me the nganmara, which was her only clothing. Knowing that strangers were in the camp, some of the women had politely donned leafy twigs, but this lady relied on her nganmara and deftly swung it from under her arm.

276 In west Arnhem Land, tobacco pipes are made from
[237] large crab claws. More elaborate pipes are also made by boring the pithy centre from a soft jungle shrub and plugging

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

are painted on the clean smooth skull. Bones are often carried for years in long bark parcels, and women wail over them at any hour of the day or night. Once this poignancy passes, the ceremonies are completed, and an inter-tribal gathering is regarded as suitable for a bone-burial; several skeletons may be interred in the one post. These long hollow burial-posts are cut from the hollow trunks of gum trees, scraped smooth, and carefully painted with designs and symbols descriptive of totem centres. Mourning ceremonies are conducted each night until the bones are packed inside; skulls and large bones are broken up to conserve space and each bone is realistically rammed into place. At one burial ceremony I could not understand why one horde painted the skull and another horde dressed body bones, and it was explained that the bones belonged to one horde and the skull to another. This skull should have been interred ten years previously, when the skeleton was packed in a burial post, but the women did not want to part with it and had kept it till the present ceremony.

With a shout men close in on the burial post and run with it to a small hole in the sand, where it is erected and rammed into place, to stand about twelve feet above ground. In a frenzy of emotion, men dance round it in a final benediction and are encouraged by intensified wailing from the women. An unnatural silence follows the dance, for it concludes abruptly when the leader says simply: 'It is finished.' No further interest is taken in the bones even if the post later topples over and they are scattered on the sand.

Skeletons on the Wessel Islands and Woodah Island are deposited in caves. Scores of bats hung from the roof and fluttered into the sunlight when I went into this cave of the dead on Woodah Island. Skulls lay around in all stages of disintegration, and on the floor there was a pile of bone dust almost two feet high. A large horde once lived here, but now, apart from those who occasionally come over from the

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

*[773] [778] A goanna was among the many sacred totems in the canoe, and he fared better than the rest; he swam ashore and hid [779] in a lagoon. His lagoon is now an important totem centre, and the lesser-spirit, or mali, of the goanna guards it. As in many underground springs, the water occasionally bubbles up in the lagoon, and this is a sign that the goanna is moving [562] below. No women are allowed near the totem, and if yams [784] in the vicinity are eaten the results are fatal. Old men who remember the Macassars told me that when they attempted [648] to make their trepang camps on the beach by the lagoon the Yulengor got rid of them by refusing to allow them to use the water or to gather firewood.

Restrictions are enforced on firewood in the area, because the goanna sent his mali into one of the trees growing by the spring. When the Junkgowa followed the goanna ashore, they were attracted by the singular beauty of this tree, for as [825] well as the goanna-mali they saw a small red parrot in the [531] branches. They declared that thereafter the feathers of this parrot were to be used in decorating totems of the Dua moiety. The tree was pronounced sacred; there are now [824] many of them near the lagoon, and the tabu has been extended to them all.

*[773] [779] Totems, or 'rungga', floated ashore, and the Junkgowa hung them in the tree to dry. But when the pandanus palm armlets were washed up on the beach, they sprang to life and grew of their own accord, and the Junkgowa stripped them [824] of their fronds and wove them into the first aboriginal armlets, dilly-bags, and nganmaras. These articles are in everyday use, but because the Junkgowa made them, they are also totems, and their story is preserved in the songs and ceremonies of the guardian horde.

Two other sacred centres were visited between Blue Mud [778] Bay and Cape Arnhem, where the Junkgowa performed miracles and taught their children totemic secrets and dances. [796] It is the record of these activities, some of them so trivial as

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

record the event. At high tide this rock is covered by sea water, and to this day it pours out a stream of fresh crystal-clear water.

A geologist might explain this Junkgowa miracle, by observing that the spring-water holds iron in solution, and that as it bubbles up, the surrounding sand is cemented and built into a crater. A similar structure in Arnhem Bay was put to use by Macassar traders, who wedged a hollow tree trunk into the neck of the spring. The fresh spring-water rose inside the tree, ran out along the hollow limb and into the fishermen's buckets brought alongside in their canoes. Though the salt water rose over the spring, the fresh water continued to flow from this improvised fountain.

Once the Elcho Island totems had been established, the Junkgowa parted company. The Men remained to guard the site, but the female Junkgowa had many totems and unborn children to distribute, so they crossed to the mainland. They followed the shores of Castlereagh Bay, placing the totems, establishing new hordes, creating peculiar rock formations, and making food areas. By the sea they made shallow marine plains, and on them planted sea-grass, and in these salt-water pastures they left turtle and dugong. Near the head of the bay the Women produced children in greater numbers, saying: 'We must go slowly up and down, leaving hordes and totems here, or we shall never get rid of them.' This accounts for the large number of hordes around Castlereagh Bay, which has the densest population in Arnhem Land. On a wide plain they planted clumps of jungle and allocated a separate jungle to each horde for its totem centre, and in each jungle a pair of children were born and told to inaugurate a horde.

By the low-lying shores of Castlereagh Bay the Women found salt-water plains, where they opened their dilly-bags to distribute totems, but found that they had already given away all those decorated with red feathers. Those remaining

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

were adorned with clay, string, and fur, and in consequence this form of decoration is still used here, whereas to the east of Castlereagh Bay strikingly beautiful decorations are made with red and green parrot feathers.

Two old Men who were sitting by their fish traps, saw the Women, and said: 'What Women are these?' Self-consciously both Men and Junkgowa Women wound string round their waists and snatched green twigs for pubic shields. Later the Men invited the Women to share their camp: 'Come over here,' they said, 'we have plenty of fish.' As they approached the camp, the Women noticed that their Junkgowa dialect had undergone a subtle change, for they were unconsciously adopting the dialect of the fishermen. For many moons the Ancestresses ate fish from the fish traps, which are still a pronounced feature in aboriginal life on the salt plains. They taught the Men new songs and dances and sent out their offspring with totems and stone implements to found hordes. But beckoning smoke again rose in the west, and the Ancestresses left the Men to their fish traps.

From this point the account of their wanderings is vague, for they reached the borders of a new group of hordes which have their own creation myths, beliefs, customs, and language. Nevertheless, my informers emphatically asserted that, although these western 'foreigners' are self-contained and have no intercourse eastward, they were created by the Junkgowa. My guides had previously skirted the 'foreign' west country in canoes and pearling luggers, and when they noticed any features such as the sand dunes at Hall's Point and nearby food swamps they claimed them as the work of the Junkgowa.

Still farther to the west, some five hundred miles from their original landing at Port Bradshaw, the Women came to the open sea at Cape Don. They were perplexed by the sight of the sea barring their way, and scratched their heads, and threw the lice into the sea. But the lice

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

142
764
531
301

BURIAL POST IN A DESERTED CAMP

[facing p150]